

**CAPITOL ZONING DISTRICT COMMISSION  
STAFF REPORT  
2/19/14  
TDM / BIM**



**Location:** 1510 S. Arch Street & 615 W. 15<sup>th</sup> Street  
**Applicant:** Cassie Toro for Gaines Street Baptist Church  
**Permit Type:** Certificate of Appropriateness

**Project Description:** This application is for a Certificate of Appropriateness to allow for the removal of the existing structures, parking lots, and other site features in Block 214 of the Original City of Little Rock.

**Historic Significance:** This block, from 15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> Streets between Arch and Gaines, has held a wide variety of uses throughout its history. A Union fort occupied part of the area during the Civil War, and as late as 1950 the block contained an ice cream factory, a row of storefronts, a service station, and several houses. The Arch Street Church of Christ building seen today was constructed in 1959 on a previously undeveloped lot. The church's plain basilica form features minimal architectural detailing, save for some structural pilasters. It is unknown when several of the original window and door openings were filled in. The 1987 architectural survey noted that:

“[s]ince its construction, this church has demolished four houses to create parking (something only Trinity & 1<sup>st</sup> Baptist have done near the Governor's Mansion. – all other churches have relied on on-street parking). The houses were located at 1500, 1510, 1516, and 1522 Arch St. Only the garage apartment at 1500 remains [now 615 W. 15<sup>th</sup>]. The garage of 1510 has been incorporated into the church.”

Gaines Street Baptist Church purchased the property in 1998. It has since used the space as classrooms and a community center, and has also leased the building to several other congregations, including the First Keep It Real Fellowship Church, and the current tenant, Triumphant Deliverance Fellowship. The property is listed as a non-contributing resource in the Governor's Mansion Historic District.

Five other garages and outbuildings have been removed from the east (Arch Street) side of Block 214 since 1950, along with several commercial structures from the west (Gaines Street) side. Buildings on Gaines Street included the Spanish Revival-style King Building at 1509, which included a laundromat downstairs and apartments upstairs, and the Dickinson Building which housed three commercial storefronts at the southwest corner of the block. All of these buildings were removed between 1950 and 2000.

The only structure remaining on the block, other than the church at 1510 Arch, is the small house at 615 W. 15<sup>th</sup> Street. This plain traditional structure with was built in the 1940s as a garage apartment for the former Gillespie House at 1500 S. Arch. Also owned by Gaines Street Baptist Church, it has been recently used as church offices and rental residential. It is unknown when the original windows were replaced and artificial siding installed. The structure is located in the Governor's Mansion Historic District, but its status as contributing or non-contributing was never evaluated.

The block proposed for clearance also includes several site features including parking lots, some trees and historic retaining walls, and the circular concrete driveway of a former store at the northwest corner.

**Previous Action:** The Arch Street Church of Christ received a permit to construct a small addition at the northeast corner of the building in 1981. The church later added a large parking lot at the corner of 15<sup>th</sup> Street and Arch in late 1983 without a permit. The parking lot violated CZDC setback and landscaping requirements, so the church applied for a variance. That application was withdrawn in 1985, and a portion of the asphalt was removed to create perimeter landscaping along Arch and 15<sup>th</sup> Streets.

In 1985, the Commission issued a permit for the redevelopment of the buildings on the west (Gaines Street) side of the block for a variety of commercial and office uses, but revoked the permit the following year when the developer failed to begin the work. The Commission also filed an injunction to stop the operation of an unpermitted auto-detail service at 1509 S. Gaines. The commercial buildings at the southwest corner of the block were badly damaged by a windstorm around 1990 and removed soon thereafter. The King Building at 1509 S. Gaines was also removed around 1996. It appears no permits were issued for these demolitions.

**Zoning:** This structure is located in Zone "M". This residential zone comprises most the Mansion Area.

### **Review Standards for Certificates of Appropriateness:**

#### Capitol Zoning District Commission Rule, Section 2-105. C. 1. (b)

A Certificate of Appropriateness shall be required for the total or partial destruction of any structure, accessory structure or site improvement. Applications for demolition which require approval of the Commission, will first be scheduled for a review by the Design Review Committee which will make a recommendation regarding the architectural, historical or cultural significance of the structure or improvement; the impact of its demolition on the character of the neighborhood and the District and on the goals of the Master Plan; the physical and economic possibilities for its rehabilitation, taking into account the source of any alleged deterioration in the condition of the structure or improvement, i.e., whether the condition was caused or contributed to by neglect.

#### Capitol Zoning District Commission Rule, Section 2-105. C. 1. (e)

When considering an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness, the Commission shall consider any applicable review Standards and Master Plan goals, the recommendations offered by the committees and staff, as well as any public testimony or evidence presented at the public hearing.

#### Capitol Zoning District Commission Rule, Section 2-105. F.

... All changes in the Capitol Zoning District will be evaluated according to the General Standards and the applicable Area Framework Plan. Changes to historic structures or site features shall be evaluated according to the Rehabilitation Standards for Historic Properties. Structures and site features 40 years or older are assumed to be historic, unless they have been significantly altered, and reversing the alteration(s) would be impossible or wholly unreasonable ... Changes to all other structures and site features, as well as new construction, shall be evaluated according to the applicable Design Standards.

#### Capitol Zoning Rehabilitation Standards for Historic Properties, *Interpretation of Terms Related to Compliance*

*Historic* - In general, a historic property is one that is at least 40 years old or older and largely unchanged; some properties less than 40 years old may also be considered historic if they are of exceptional significance. The CZDC is especially concerned with those properties that are associated with significant people or events or convey a character of building and design found during the District's period of significance, roughly 1880-1940. Note that in some cases, a CZDC-designated property may also be listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

*Staff finds the structures to be historic because of their age and minimal alterations. Staff finds the proposal should be evaluated using the Rehabilitation Standards and the Mansion Area Master Plan. Staff finds that the house at 615 W. 15<sup>th</sup>, as well as the main portion of the church at 1510 S. Arch, were each built after the District's period of significance. Staff however finds that the two-story wing attached to the southwest corner of the church was built during the period of significance, but that this structure was substantially altered by the addition of the church building.*

### Capitol Zoning Rehabilitation Standards for Historic Properties, *Concept of Integrity*

In addition to being from a historical period, a property also must have integrity, in that a sufficient percentage of the structure must date from the period of significance. The majority of the building's structural system and materials should date from the period of significance and its character defining features also should remain intact. These may include architectural details, such as dormers and porches, ornamental brackets and moldings and materials, as well as the overall mass and form of the building. It is these elements that allow a building to be recognized as a product of its own time.

*Staff finds that although each of the main structures has seen some alterations, they have both retained enough of their original form and appearance to be recognized as products of their own time. Staff believes each structure has retained its basic integrity and should be considered historic.*

### Capitol Zoning Rehabilitation Standards for Historic Properties, *Preservation Principles*

**Principle 2:** Seek uses that are compatible with the historic character of the building.

**Principle 3:** Protect and maintain significant features and stylistic elements.

**Principle 4:** Preserve any existing original site features or original building materials and features.

**Principle 5:** Repair deteriorated historic features, and replace only those elements that cannot be repaired.

### Capitol Zoning Rehabilitation Standards for Historic Properties, *Historic Building Materials*

**Policy:** Primary historic building materials should be preserved in place whenever feasible. When the material is damaged, limited replacement which matches the original should be considered.

**\* R2.1 Preserve original building materials.**

### Capitol Zoning Rehabilitation Standards for Historic Properties, *Windows*

**Policy:** The character-defining features of historic windows and their distinctive arrangement on a wall should be preserved ...

**\* R3.1 Preserve the functional and decorative features of a historic window.**

**\*R3.2 Preserve the position, number and arrangement of historic windows in a building wall.**

### Capitol Zoning Rehabilitation Standards for Historic Properties, *Doors*

**Policy:** The character-defining features of a historic door and its distinct materials and placement should be preserved ...

**\*R4.1 Preserve the decorative and functional features of a primary entrance.**

### Capitol Zoning Rehabilitation Standards for Historic Properties, *Architectural Details*

**Policy:** Architectural details help establish a historic building's distinct visual character; thus, they should be preserved whenever feasible. If architectural details are damaged beyond repair, their replacement, matching the original detailing, is recommended.

**\* R6.1 Avoid removing or altering significant architectural details.**

**\* R6.3 Protect and maintain significant stylistic elements.**

**R6.5 Minimize intervention with historic elements.**

### Capitol Zoning Rehabilitation Standards for Historic Properties, *Roofs*

**Policy:** The character of a roof should be preserved, including its form and materials, whenever feasible.

**\* R7.1 Preserve the original roof form.**

**\* R7.5 Preserve original roof materials.**

**\* R7.6 Preserve significant design features of historic roofs.**

*Staff finds the proposal to be wholly inconsistent with all of the principles, policies, and standards listed above.*

### Capitol Zoning Rehabilitation Standards for Historic Properties, *About This Document*

An asterisk adjacent to a statement in the text indicates that it is a standard that will not be waived by the Capitol Zoning District Commission for historic structures or site features built during the District's period of significance, except as an Economic Hardship. For other historic structures or site features, these standards may be waived if it is demonstrated to the Commission's satisfaction that such a waiver will not adversely affect the historic integrity of the property or the surrounding neighborhood.

*Staff finds, based on documentary and physical evidence, the main structures proposed for demolition were not built during the District's period of significance. But staff does not believe that the applicant has demonstrated the proposal will not adversely affect the historic integrity of the neighborhood. Staff finds the standards listed above should not be waived.*

### The Secretary of the Interior's Standard for the Rehabilitation of Historic Properties

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of a property should be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use ...
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced ...
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.

*Staff finds the proposal to be wholly inconsistent with these standards.*

### Mansion Area Master Plan, Planning Goals

2. To rehabilitate dilapidated historic structures in and around the neighborhood.
3. To create an improved image and stronger sense of identity.
4. To continue to develop a more family-friendly environment for residents and visitors alike.

*Staff finds the proposal is not consistent with these goals.*

### Mansion Area Master Plan, Urban Design Goals

1. To preserve the character of the Mansion Area neighborhood and individual historic buildings.
3. To establish a sense of visual continuity within the Mansion Area neighborhood.

*Staff finds the proposal is not consistent with these goals. Staff believes that demolition of historic structures can serve to detract from the Mansion Area's character and visual continuity, to reinforce negative stereotypes about downtown Little Rock, and to undermine the Mansion Area's image as Little Rock's premier historic neighborhood.*

**Neighborhood Reaction:** None to date.

**Design Review Committee Recommendation:** The Committee voted 4-0 to recommend **denial**. Members indicated they might be willing to consider recommending demolition, depending on the applicant's plans for new development.

**Mansion Area Advisory Committee Recommendation:** The MAAC voted 14-3 to recommend **approval**, with two members abstaining. Members voting for the application emphasized their support for potential new development, and questioned the historic significance of the structures proposed for demolition. Several committee members also praised the applicant for her work rehabilitating other historic structures in the neighborhood. Dissenting members noted their concurrence with staff's findings.

**Proposed Findings:** Based on the materials submitted by the applicant and architectural surveys conducted from 1977 to 1998, staff finds that:

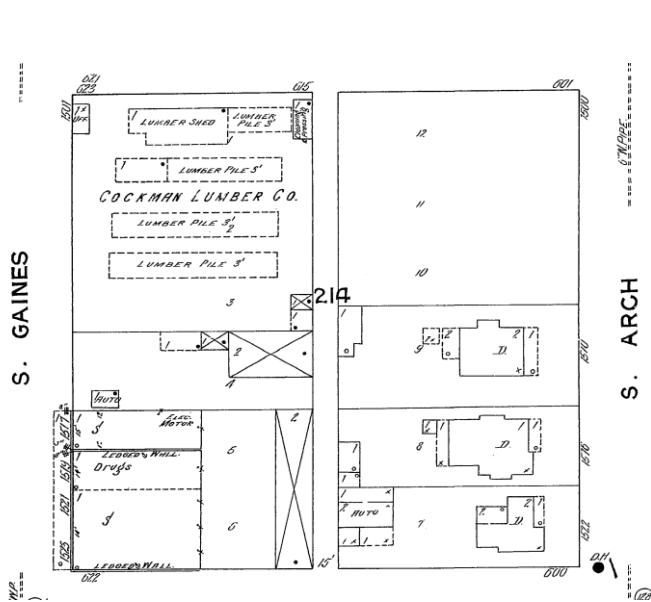
- 1) This application to demolish structures cannot be approved at the staff level;
- 2) The Arch Street Church of Christ building at 1510 South Arch is a largely intact mid-century church building;
- 3) The church building, though historic, was not constructed during the District's period of significance;
- 4) The attached two story structure at the southeast corner of the church was built during the District's period of significance, but was substantially altered by the addition of the church building;
- 5) The house at 615 West 15<sup>th</sup>, though historic, was not built during the District's period of significance;
- 6) The proposed demolitions are wholly inconsistent with all of the applicable review criteria;
- 7) The Rehabilitation Standards listed above should not be waived, because the applicant has not demonstrated the proposed work will not adversely affect the neighborhood;

**Staff Recommendation:** Based on the above findings, staff therefore recommends denial of the application. Staff believes that the Commission's charge to protect historic resources and materials should only be set aside in the most extenuating circumstances, but does not believe this proposal rises to such a level.

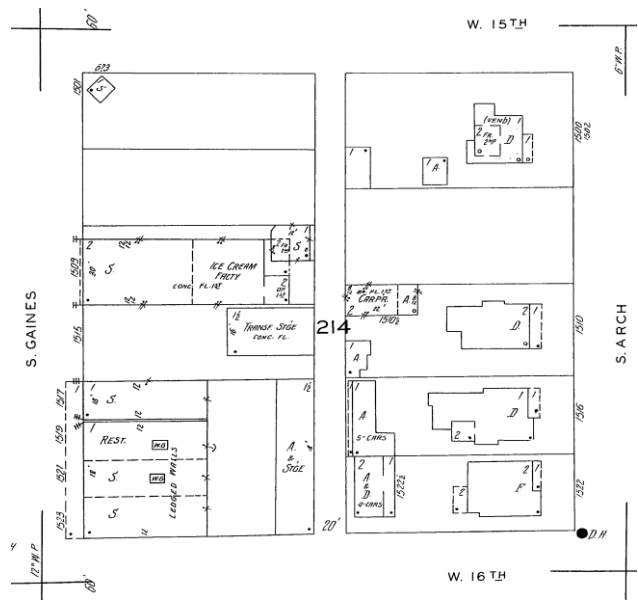
**\*\*\* UPDATE (3/14/14) \*\*\***

Staff has now received eight written communications and three phone calls in support of the application from nearby residents and property owners. These neighbors emphasized their support for potential new development

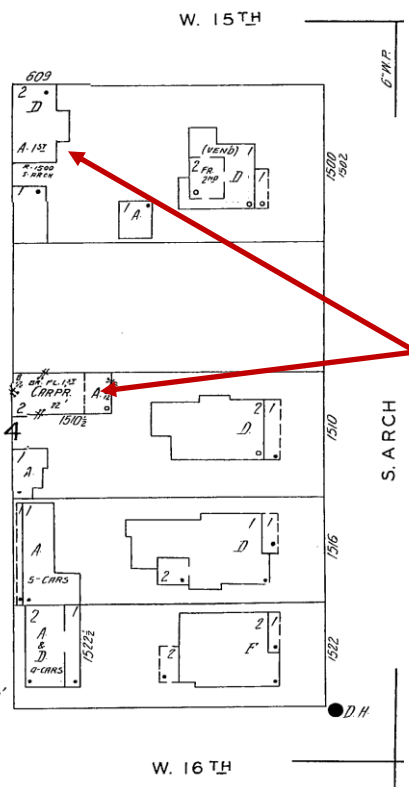
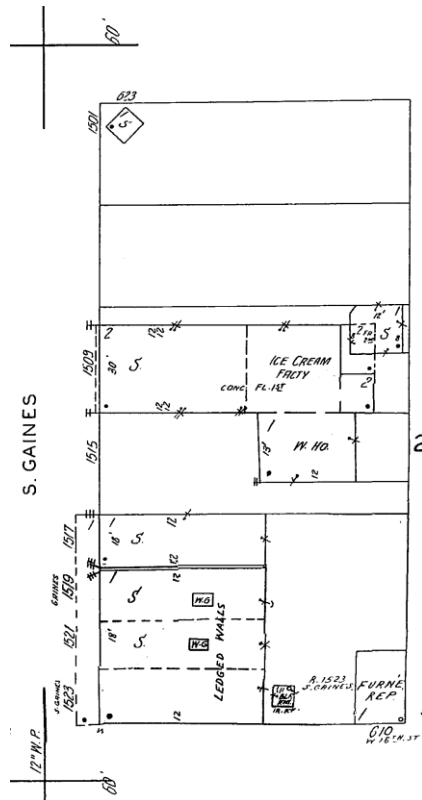
## Details from Sanborn Insurance Co. maps



1913 – The Arch Street side of the block has three houses, while the west side of the block features a drugstore, a lumber yard and several stables.



1939– The Gillespie House at 1500 Arch is now present. The Gaines Street side of the block now includes a restaurant, an ice cream factory, and a corner store.



**Only structures remaining on block today.**

1950 – The Arch Street Church of Christ building was constructed in the empty lot on the east side of the block a few years later. Only the garage apartments from 1500 and 1510 Arch can still be seen today.



## Archive photos of block



1978 – Gillespie House at 1500 S. Arch, gone



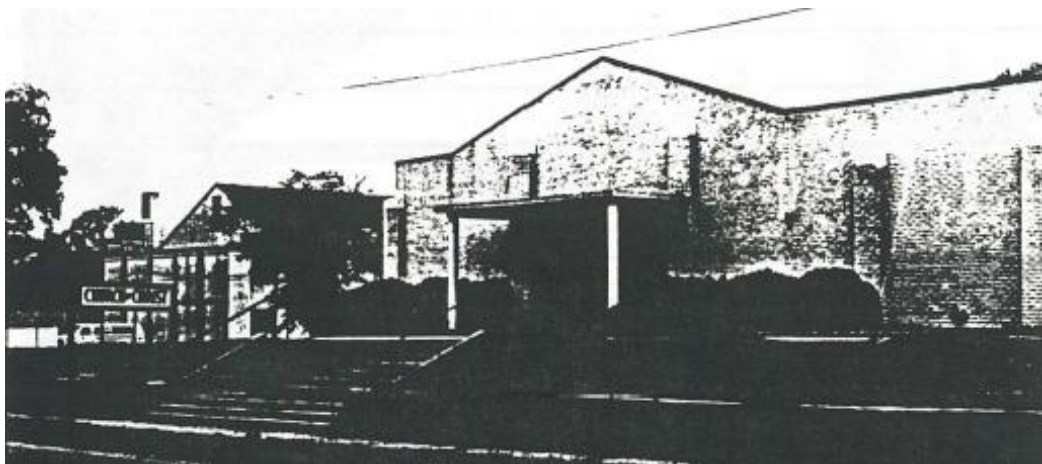
1980 – King Building at 1509 S. Gaines, gone



1980 – 1517-1523 S. Gaines, gone



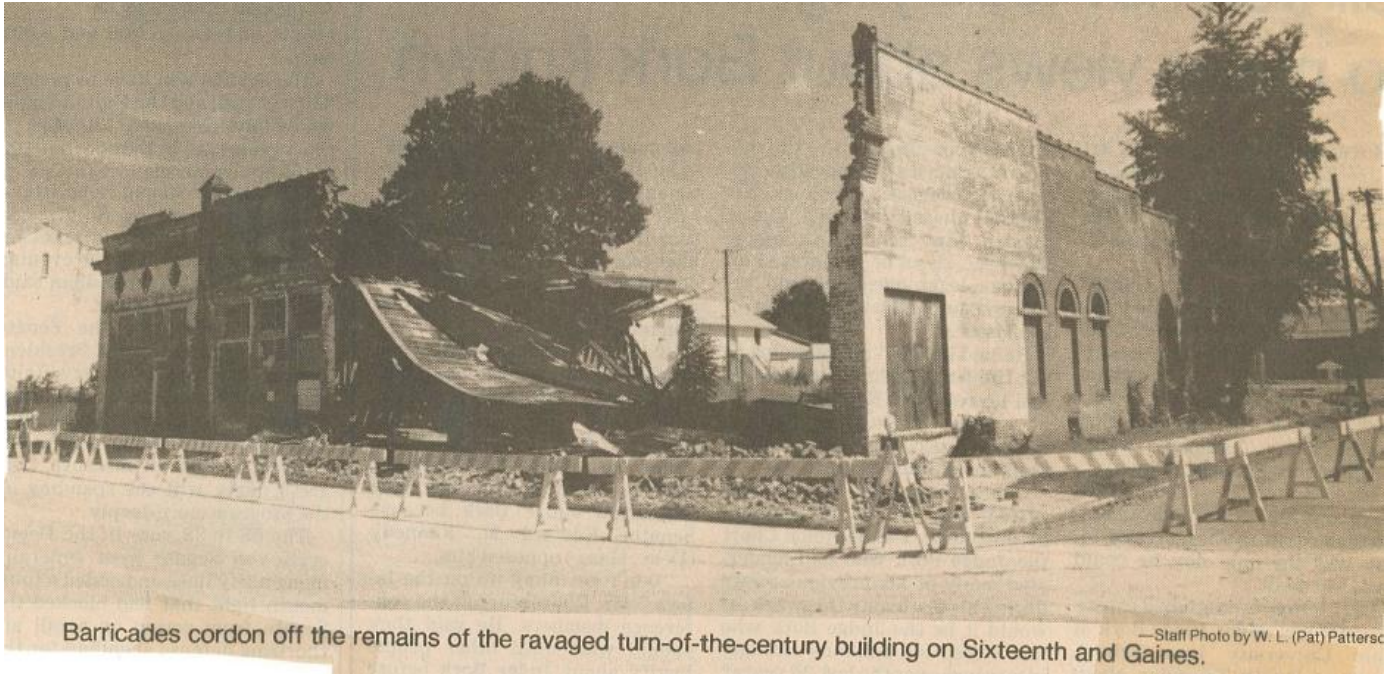
1981 – Sign at 1510 S. Arch



1987 – Arch Street Church of Christ at 1510 S. Arch. The unobstructed view to the rear of Gaines Street Baptist Church (on the left) indicates the former houses at 1516 and 1522 Arch had already been removed.



More archive photos



ca. 1990 - *Arkansas Gazette* coverage of windstorm damage to Gaines Street commercial buildings



1998 – 1510 S. Arch and 615 W. 15<sup>th</sup>



2011 – A recent tenant's sign at 1510 S. Arch



Current photos of block



Facing east from Gaines Street



Front façade of 1510 S. Arch



Northeast corner of church building

### Additional current photos



This two-story wing at the southwest corner of the church building was originally the garage apartment of the former house at 1510 S. Arch. It is now the oldest structure on the block.



Circular driveway of former store at southeast corner of 15<sup>th</sup> and Gaines



House at 615 W. 15<sup>th</sup> (built as garage apartment of former house at 1500 S. Arch)



## CAPITOL ZONING DISTRICT COMMISSION

### APPLICATION FORM

PROPERTY ADDRESS Block 214 of Original City

PROPERTY OWNER Gaines St. Baptist

PERSON FILING APPLICATION Cassie Toro  
*if other than owner*

APPLICANT PHONE AND EMAIL [REDACTED]

APPLICANT SIGNATURE Cassie Toro 2/24/14  
AND DATE

*Signature certifies that applicant is authorized to represent this property, and that all information presented in this application, as well as in any supporting materials, is true and correct to the best of the signatory's knowledge.*

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED WORK AND / OR USE Demo existing structures & parking lots